Sent: Tuesday, January 18, 2022 10:36:57 AM

Personal Information
Full name: emily Gerbrandt
Email address: Job Title:
Organization:
Address:
City: Winnipeg
Province or territory: Manitoba
Postal code:

Delegation Information
Committee: Executive Policy Committee
Committee - other:
Agenda Item: Item No. 1 Strategies and Tools to Enhance Neighbourhood Liveability via the Doing Business in Winnipeg By-law - Problematic Business Activities

Service Inquiry: Submit Comments in writing
Participation preference: N/A
Comments in writing: Although the removal of bylaws on escort agencies and body rub parlours could have been a positive step towards ending the hyper surveillance and criminalization of sex workers, it appears this project has become ensnared by anti-sex work proponents and reinstates police as a dominant force surveilling sex workers in these professions under the guise of 'prevention' 'savourism' and 'protection from trafficking.' What is missing here is the distinct and necessary knowledge of sex workers over their own lives and what is best for them. Whereas trafficking is a serious problem populated predominantly by labour exploitation and human rights violations to workers, the framing of this problem as wholly, if not completely wrapped up in sex work, implying the need for prohibitionist organizations, alongside police, to couple their powers to surveil and intervene on sex workers under the name of 'trafficking prevention' unfortunately narrows the scope of the trafficking problem and marginalizes the voices, expertise, and agency of sex workers on this issue. As sex workers have repeatedly asked council to 'fight trafficking, not sex workers', the conclusion of this item seems to do the opposite by expanding the power of legal and extra-legal agencies that are not sex worker-led, but rather have a known history of paternalizing and villanizing sex workers. Sex work is work, and sex workers have resoundingly called for the decriminalization of their profession, ending the surveillance and profiling of sex workers, and valuing the expertise and knowledge of sex workers in the fight against human trafficking. I asked that the council reconsider this item and the recommendation to expand the power of prohibitionist groups like the Joy Smith Foundation and its new-minted National Human Trafficking Education Centre, which does not center on sex workers expertise, and rather listen to sex workers advocating for decriminalization of their work as an essential feature of increasing sex worker safety.
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